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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT, ROL COORDINATOR, USAID, IRMO

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SUBJECT: SUNNI POLITICIANS SAY HAWIJAH PRIME FOR COALITION
INTERVENTION

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Two members of the Iraqi Republican Gathering separately stressed the need to expand Coalition outreach to Sunni Arabs in Hawijah - a Sunni Arab city southwest of Kirkuk. They admitted the city was a Ba'athist stronghold, but claimed it had few foreign fighters, and recommended that the Coalition reach out to Hawijah's Ba'athist community rather than the city's corruptible tribal shaykhs. One contact estimated that there were 1000 former army officers and 250 former police officers that remain unemployed and angry. They argued that the Coalition should work towards employing or re-instating dismissed officers. They also stressed the need for better intelligence in the area to identify terrorists. END SUMMARY.

HAWIJAH - A CALL FOR COALITION INTERVENTION

¶2. (C) Hawijah, a Sunni Arab city southwest of Kirkuk, has two main tribes - Ubayd and Jabur - and each of the five Sunni Arabs on the Kirkuk provincial council is from one of these two tribes. IPAQ's recently held separate meetings with Iraqi Republican Gathering (IRG) leaders in Kirkuk, Ahmed Hammed al-Ubaydi, head of IRG's Kirkuk office, and Rakan Said Ali Radwan al-Jabburi, IRG Kirkuk Provincial Council member. Both contacts stressed the need to expand outreach to other Sunni Arabs. Ubaydi admitted that Hawijah was a Ba'athist stronghold but claimed it had only a few foreign fighters. Jabburi believed that terrorism was increasing in the area over the course of the last year. They recommended that the Coalition reach out to Hawijah's Ba'athist community rather than the city's corruptible tribal shaykhs. (Comment. This is an interesting suggestion coming from members of the city's two key tribes. We speculate that Jabburi and Ubaydi may have an axe to grind with their tribal leaders for not receiving a fair share of past Coalition funds dispersed to their shaykhs. End Comment.)

¶3. (C) Jabburi estimated that Hawijah held 1000 former army officers and 250 former police officers that, although highly educated and qualified, were left idle and unemployed. He noted that "Kurds label all Sunnis as Ba'athists and terrorists" and that Sunnis could not obtain positions in Kirkuk. Ubaydi suggested that the Coalition needed to arrest the "four Ba'athist leaders who control Hawijah," but they should work towards employing or re-instating dismissed military officers,

who remain unemployed and angry. Hawijah Ba'athists were not organized, but retained fundamental Ba'athist ideology, including the goal of one great Arab nation, an anti-American stance, and a sense of entitlement as the "true" administrators in Baghdad. The time to act was now because there were no powerful parties in Hawijah. Jabburi stressed the need for better intelligence in the area to identify terrorists.

SUNNI ARAB POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

¶4. (C) The IRG, led by Sa'ad al-Janabi, is aligned with Ayad Allawi's Iraqi list and was promoting a nationalistic rather than religious character for Iraq, according to our interlocutors. The party was working to oppose the Unified Iraqi Alliance and to improve the central government's functionality and ability to deliver on civil projects. The IRG in Kirkuk was focused primarily on galvanizing local Sunnis to become involved in the political process. Ubaydi implied his party's efforts in northern Iraq had motivated a large number of Sunni Arabs to vote in the December 2005 national elections.

¶5. (C) Following the Al Askariyah mosque attack in Samarra, the IRG sent memos to the Badr Organization and Sadrists to confirm its rejection of the terrorist attack. Sunni Arabs in the Tikrit and Kirkuk areas expressed their support to the Shia Arabs and even wanted to participate in their peaceful negotiations, according to Ubaydi. He also praised the local police for their role in stymieing reactionary attacks and facilitating peaceful demonstrations. Ubaydi said he hoped that Iraqis in other regions would look to the Kirkuk province's example in handling ethnic and sectarian sensitivities.

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

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¶6. (SBU) Ubaydi was born in Kirkuk city in 1959. A Sunni Arab, he joined the IRG after Operation Iraqi Freedom and currently heads the IRG's main office in Kirkuk. Ubaydi is a member of the Arab Consultative Council in Kirkuk province. He earned a bachelor's degree in military science from Baghdad University in 1981 and a law degree from Kirkuk University in ¶2003. Ubaydi was a military officer in Saddam Husayn's regime, but it removed him from his post following the 1991 Gulf War on accusations of demonstrating against the war. Jabburi has a Bachelors degree in chemistry and used to be employed in the petro-chemical industry. The IRG has five seats on the Kirkuk Provincial Council-more than any other Sunni group-but does not hold a provincial leadership post.

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